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Summary record of the 39th meeting
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Chairman: Mr. Ashe ..... (Antigua and Barbuda)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Saha

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 124: Programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007 (*continued*)

Strengthened and unified security management system for the United Nations: standardized access control (A/60/7/Add.35 and A/60/695)

Information and communication technology security, business continuity and disaster recovery (A/60/7/Add.33 and A/60/677)

1. **Mr. Veness** (Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security), introducing the Secretary-General's report on a strengthened and unified security management system (A/60/695), recalled that, following the tragic events of 11 September 2001, a number of steps had been taken to strengthen the security and safety of United Nations premises. However, in its resolution 59/276, the General Assembly had decided to defer consideration of the specific project for a global access control system until the second part of its resumed fifty-ninth session. Subsequently, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) and the General Assembly had endorsed the view that, in light of the magnitude, cost and complexity of the project, a stronger coordination mechanism was required, and had also supported the recommendation to establish an access control project team within the Department of Safety and Security.

2. The report currently before the Committee outlined the progress made since November 2005. The measures proposed had been developed on the basis of internal and interdepartmental consultations and the recommendations put forward by a team of experts that had reviewed security arrangements at a number of offices away from Headquarters, the regional commissions and the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in October 2005. In order to bring all surveyed locations to a baseline security level with regard to access control, the experts had identified four main areas in need of immediate strengthening: perimeter security, closed-circuit television systems, vehicle and pedestrian access points and control room security.

3. The objective of the access control project was to enhance security as quickly as possible by addressing mandatory requirements ahead of advisory ones. Accordingly, as described in paragraphs 27 and 28 of the report, a two-phased approach was proposed. The recommendations contained in the report were designed only to enhance and strengthen existing structures. Wherever possible, existing access control equipment would be used but, as the relevant technology was still evolving, the Department of Safety and Security would continue to work with the Department of Management to ensure that the measures implemented were compatible, cost-effective and adequate. In order to strengthen interdepartmental coordination, a steering group had been set up to supervise and lead the existing project team.

4. In closing, he stressed that the global access control project was not an ambitious attempt to link access at all main locations worldwide to a central database through the use of a single identity card issued by Headquarters. The project's true aim was to reduce critical location-specific security vulnerabilities. While host Governments bore the primary responsibility for the safety and security of United Nations personnel and activities, the Organization must retain security control within its property line. The measures proposed in the report were designed to ensure that access to and within United Nations premises was controlled so that the Organization's staff could perform their functions in a safe and secure environment.

5. **Ms. Nowlan** (Chief of the Common Support Services Service of the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts), introducing the note by the Secretariat on information and communication technology security, business continuity and disaster recovery (A/60/677), said that a technical study on the establishment and maintenance of a global business continuity and disaster recovery capability had been carried out to validate the preliminary work undertaken, refine the business requirements and evaluate alternative solutions. The findings of the study had highlighted areas requiring further review, including the possibility of building upon existing infrastructure, improving capacity and building a common pool of skills. However, further analysis was required to identify potential cost savings.

6. The Secretary-General intended to complete that additional work with the help of independent technical advisers, as necessary. The cost of those services, estimated at $250,000, would be met from within existing resources. The Secretary-General proposed to submit his comprehensive report on the project to the General Assembly at its sixty-first session.

7. **Mr. Saha** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) introduced the related reports of the Advisory Committee (A/60/7/Add.35 and Add.33). Referring to the report contained in document A/60/695, he pointed out that, while the Secretary-General had originally intended to address the issue of a strengthened and unified security management system in a comprehensive report to be submitted at the sixtieth session of the General Assembly, he was currently proposing to proceed in two phases and to submit a second report to the Assembly at its sixty-first session. The Advisory Committee had been assured that any work that had been completed or was under way with regard to standardized access control would not be rendered obsolete by the capital master plan, regardless of the option chosen by the General Assembly, and expected to receive a full explanation of that issue in the next report.

8. The Advisory Committee had no objection to the proposed two-phased approach and had noted that the estimated requirements for the first phase of the project would be met through the temporary reprioritization of projects approved for the current biennium under section 32 of the programme budget. However, any plan to reactivate projects that had been delayed or deferred would be subject to the normal review and approval process of the General Assembly.

9. With regard to the note by the Secretariat contained in document A/60/677, the Advisory Committee had noted that a business assessment survey of all duty stations had been completed and that the Secretariat had concluded that, given the significant design and cost implications of the standards for business continuity, further study was required to define the different options and the related costs. That information would be submitted to the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. Resource requirements in connection with the study, in the amount of $250,000, would be met from within existing resources under section 28D of the programme budget for 2006-2007.

10. The Advisory Committee expected a comprehensive report to be submitted no later than September 2007, taking into account the capital master plan and the lessons learned from elsewhere, both inside and outside the United Nations system.

11. **Mr. Drofenik** (Austria), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania; the candidate countries Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia and Montenegro; and, in addition, the Republic of Moldova, said that, as a matter of priority, all duty stations should be brought to the same baseline security level through the rapid implementation of the first phase of the standardized access control project. The proposals contained in the Secretary-General's report gave due consideration to legitimate privacy concerns while ensuring rapid access to the facilities in question, and clearly defined the relevant managerial responsibilities.

12. While the European Union could agree to the preparation of an implementation plan for the second phase, it did not wish to commit itself to a globally integrated project at the current time. In that connection, it had noted that a decision would not be required until the sixty-first session of the General Assembly. Lastly, the European Union reiterated its request for improved cooperation among all non-Secretariat members of the High-level Committee on Management with regard to sensitive issues such as cost-sharing or malicious acts insurance.

13. **Ms. Lock** (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, stressed that every effort must be made to ensure the safety and security of United Nations staff, who were an invaluable asset to the Organization. Unfortunately, the report currently before the Committee failed to address the request made by the General Assembly in section XI, paragraph 44, of its resolution 59/276, as it did not provide sufficiently detailed information on the various aspects of the standardized access control project. Consequently, in order to make an informed decision, the Group of 77 and China would require clarification on a number of issues.

14. First, in the absence of an analysis of the potential implications, costs and benefits of linking locally integrated United Nations security systems into a global network, the Secretariat should provide additional information on how the proposals contained in the report related to the global access control project and how economies of scale were to be achieved.

15. Second, the Group of 77 and China requested clarification of some of the terminology used in the

report, including the reference, in paragraph 10, to standardization at the local, regional and global levels. Third, although the Department of Safety and Security had the primary responsibility for ensuring the safety and security of United Nations premises and staff, paragraphs 11 to 13 of the report referred to the role of the Department of Management in that area; the Group would like further information in that regard.

16. Fourth, additional resources were being sought to bring all locations to an appropriate baseline security level. However, that baseline was constantly shifting and did not appear to take account of either the individual characteristics of each location or the investment that had already been made. Accordingly, the Secretariat should provide further justification for the resource requirements set out in the report, including a site-by-site breakdown of costs. Some indication should also be given of how the results of the assessment of the security infrastructure of the main locations were reflected in the proposals.

17. Fifth, the Secretariat should endeavour to respond fully to the request contained in section XI, paragraph 44 (e), of General Assembly resolution 59/276 and to clarify whether or not the global identity management system would be implemented. In particular, additional information should be provided on the elements referred to in paragraph 20 of the report, including their relationship to the resources approved at the Assembly's fifty-sixth session.

18. Sixth, the report did not adequately address the request contained in section XI, paragraph 44 (b), of the aforementioned resolution. The Secretariat should explain why it believed that the same level of human resources should be maintained once the proposed global access control system and related technologies had been implemented. It should also explain why paragraph 22 of the report outlined several functions that had not been approved by the General Assembly. Seventh, the Group of 77 and China wondered whether or not the turnstile project was compatible with the proposed global access control system, and would like to receive a detailed explanation of the relationship between those two projects.

19. Since the report did not clearly set out the concept, scope and revised course of action for the project, the Secretariat should elaborate on those elements. The Group of 77 and China was concerned that, owing to the absence of a comprehensive report, the General Assembly had thus far been unable to approve the design of the project. Member States could not be expected to assess the various components of the proposals, including the level of funding sought, if they did not have the information requested in section XI, paragraph 44, of General Assembly resolution 59/276, as well as details on previously approved projects, including in the context of the capital master plan. Issues relating to the security and safety of United Nations staff should not be dealt with piecemeal and without proper guidance from the Department of Safety and Security.

20. Lastly, the Group of 77 and China urged the General Assembly to take the necessary steps to ensure that staff were recruited to Professional posts in the Department of Safety and Security on a wide geographic basis. With regard to other categories of posts, there was also a need to maintain the international character of the Organization. In view of indications that the relevant provisions of General Assembly resolution 59/276 had not been adhered to, the Group of 77 and China would pursue the issue of recruitment in the informal consultations.

21. **Mr. Elnaggar** (Egypt) said that one of the problems facing the Fifth Committee was the fact that its concerns had not been properly addressed by the Secretariat. Considerable time, effort and resources had gone into the adoption of General Assembly resolution 59/276, but the requests set out in paragraph 44 thereof had been totally disregarded during the drafting of the report under consideration, thereby preventing the Assembly, which was taking up the question for the third time, from reaching an informed decision. If the so-called reform of the United Nations meant that Member States were to take only strategic decisions and embrace a corporate, Secretariat-led management approach, then perhaps the Committee should simply agree not to request any further reports from the Secretariat.

22. Having read the report, he was more confused than ever about the proposed access control system. Was it a global or a standardized system, and what were the differences and similarities between those two concepts? Paragraph 44 (b) of resolution 59/276 requested a detailed analysis of the impact of implementing the global access control system on human resources requirements in the area of safety and security, but the report devoted only one paragraph to that issue, stating merely that the introduction of access

control technology would eliminate human error. Clearly, there was a serious problem of miscommunication among the Committee, the Secretariat and ACABQ.

23. The Department of Safety and Security had been established for the sole purpose of providing coherent leadership and guidance in the area of safety and security. However, a number of other departments, including the Department of Management and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, were evidently involved in the management of security-related issues. While his delegation supported the Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security, it did not see how the Committee could take note of, let alone endorse, the report currently before it, since any draft resolution prepared by the Committee on the basis of that report would contain only one paragraph reiterating the requests made in paragraph 44 of the previous year's resolution.

24. The questions set out in paragraph 44 of resolution 59/276 were of utmost importance to the work of the Organization, both at Headquarters and in the field, and they needed to be addressed in a comprehensive report. As the Ahtisaari report and several independent consultants' studies had pointed out, a clear vision and strong leadership, and not just financial resources, were required to ensure the safety and security of United Nations staff, premises and operations. His delegation was therefore unable to accept the proposal that the Secretariat should submit a detailed implementation plan at the Assembly's sixty-first session, since the exact measures to be implemented were not yet clear.

25. **Mr. Sena** (Brazil) said that his delegation attached great importance to the Secretary-General's efforts to ensure the safety and security of United Nations staff. Brazil was still mourning the loss of a number of its nationals in the line of duty, including those who had been killed in the Baghdad bombing. His delegation shared the concerns expressed regarding recruitment to Professional posts in the Department of Safety and Security, and wished to reiterate its support for the principle of equitable geographical distribution. It looked forward to receiving answers to the questions posed by the representative of South Africa.

26. **Mr. Veness** (Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security) said that, in view of the large number of questions posed and the level of detail involved, he would come back to the Committee with the answers in due course.

The meeting rose at 10.50 a.m.